

Spirituality & Community

July 2006

www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

The Solstices
Kurt Venables

The Struggle
Tony Masiello



The Buddha's First Sermon
Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

Doubt Your Doubt
Cathy and Gary Hawk

Contents

Who We Are	3
The Buddha's First Sermon	5
Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta	
Spiritual Soup	8
The Power of the Solstices and Misplaced Values Kurt Venables	
The Struggle	10
Tony Masiello	
Doubt Your Doubt, Not Your Dream	12
Cathy and Gary Hawk	

Who We Are

www.spiritualityandcommunity.com

Welcome! Seeking spiritual fulfillment? True happiness and mental wellness? Well, that's what we're all about. Spirituality & Community is a magazine, web site, and online community for those seeking answers to life's deepest questions. ***We are dedicated to promoting spirituality, true happiness, mental wellness, and appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.***

A New Age of Light

Our focus is spirituality, which we view as an inner search for happiness and fulfillment. We are concerned with what lies within the heart. ***We believe that within everyone lies a pure love that we call the Light or the Lord within. We believe that one must open one's heart to the Light to attain spiritual fulfillment and that only this brings true happiness and mental wellness.*** The Light is the essence of humanity. ***Ultimately, we find our way by casting our gaze inward.*** We will search this inner world over until we find our home:

***We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding***

We believe that mankind is entering a new age, an Age of Light. We see a growing spiritual crisis in the world today. Our culture has brought us unprecedented material well being, but we seem further away than ever from true spiritual wholeness. We also perceive an increase in mental health issues in our society and believe this to be linked to spiritual detachment. Many wander endlessly in search of the material gratification that will bring them happiness. Many have lost faith in religions and traditions. Others sincerely believe in traditional religions but remain unfulfilled spiritually and unhappy. Unfortunately, too many are so close-minded they refuse to ask what is missing from their lives. Yet, many hunger for spiritual wholeness and are searching for answers. ***We believe that we are entering a new age of enlightenment in which genuine spiritual progress will be made and that spiritual development depends upon a genuine appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.*** An appreciation for diversity of belief provides us with a fresh view of the beliefs of others, allows us to take from each set of beliefs that which rings true, and enables us to synthesize a personal spirituality that makes sense for each of us. When we view the beliefs of others with our hearts, we see truth shine through. We look with the highest regard to traditional beliefs and religions for guidance, and we also look forward. ***We believe that the past is not the end but the beginning.***



What We Do

Spirituality & Community produces a magazine and encompasses an online community. Both aspects serve as the basis for bringing together those who share our aspirations and beliefs, to meet each other and exchange ideas. We provide many opportunities for exploring spirituality and communicating with others:

- Spirituality & Community magazine*
- Features on the site*
- Online chats* (as interest arises)

The magazine is based on a Reader's Digest® type model. It is comprised primarily of reader submitted material. It is the primary mechanism for a member to both explore spirituality and communicate his or her ideas to others. Features are also posted on the site. When interest is sufficiently high, we will hold chats online. *We sincerely hope that you will find truth within, and we wish you only the best on your own personal journey!*



The Buddha's First Sermon

Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (Samyutta Nikaya 56.11)

Given in the Maha-vagga of the Samyutta Nikaya (part of the Pali canon of Theravada Buddhism), this piece is believed by Buddhists to be the first sermon given by the Buddha after his enlightenment. It was believed to have been given to a group of five monks with whom he had been searching for truth for many years. At the end of the discourse, the monk Kondanna attains the first stage of enlightenment. The piece outlines the foundations of Buddhism, including the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. For more, see www.accesstoinsight.org.

Thus I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Benares in the Deer Park at Isipatana (the Resort of Seers). There he addressed the bhikkhus of the group of five.

"Bhikkhus, these two extremes ought not to be cultivated by one gone forth from the house-life. What are the two? There is devotion to indulgence of pleasure in the objects of sensual desire, which is inferior, low, vulgar, ignoble, and leads to no good; and there is devotion to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble and leads to no good.

"The middle way discovered by a Perfect One avoids both these extremes; it gives vision, it gives knowledge, and it leads to peace, to direct acquaintance, to discovery, to nibbana. And what is that middle way? It is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view, right intention; right speech, right action, right livelihood; right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the middle way discovered by a Perfect One, which gives vision, which gives knowledge, and which leads to peace, to direct acquaintance, to discovery, to nibbana.

"Suffering, as a noble truth, is this: Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with the loathed is suffering, dissociation from the loved is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering — in short, suffering is the five categories of clinging objects.

"The origin of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: It is the craving that produces renewal of being accompanied by enjoyment and lust, and enjoying this and that; in other words, craving for sensual desires, craving for being, craving for non-being.

"Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: It is remainderless fading and ceasing, giving up, relinquishing, letting go and rejecting, of that same craving.

"The way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: It is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view, right intention; right speech, right action, right livelihood; right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"Suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the finding, the light, that arose in regard to ideas not heard by me before. 'This suffering, as a noble truth, can be diagnosed.' Such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the finding, the light, that arose in regard to ideas not heard by me before. 'This suffering, as a noble truth, has been diagnosed.' Such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the finding, the light, that arose in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"The origin of suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision... 'This origin of suffering, as a noble truth, can be abandoned.' Such was the vision... 'This origin of suffering, as a noble truth, has been abandoned.' Such was the vision... in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision... 'This cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, can be verified.' Such was the vision... 'This cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, has been verified.' Such was the vision... in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"The way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision... 'This way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, can be developed.' Such was the vision... 'This way leading to the cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, has been developed.' Such was the vision... in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"As long as my knowing and seeing how things are, was not quite purified in these twelve aspects, in these three phases of each of the four noble truths, I did not claim in the world with its gods, its Maras and high divinities, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, with its princes and men to have discovered the full Awakening that is supreme. But as soon as my knowing and seeing how things are, was quite purified in these twelve aspects, in these three phases of each of the four noble truths, then I claimed in the world with its gods, its Maras and high divinities, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, its princes and men to have discovered the full Awakening that is supreme. Knowing and seeing arose in me thus: 'My heart's deliverance is unassailable. This is the last birth. Now there is no renewal of being.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus of the group of five were glad, and they approved his words.

Now during this utterance, there arose in the venerable Kondañña the spotless, immaculate vision of the True Idea: "Whatever is subject to arising is all subject to cessation."

When the Wheel of Truth had thus been set rolling by the Blessed One the earthgods raised the cry: "At Benares, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the matchless Wheel of truth has been set rolling by the Blessed One, not to be stopped by monk or divine or god or death-angel or high divinity or anyone in the world."

On hearing the earth-gods' cry, all the gods in turn in the six paradises of the sensual sphere took up the cry till it reached beyond the Retinue of High Divinity in the sphere of pure form. And so indeed in that hour, at that moment, the cry soared up to the World of High Divinity, and this ten-thousandfold world-element shook and rocked and quaked, and a great measureless radiance surpassing the very nature of the gods was displayed in the world.

Then the Blessed One uttered the exclamation: "Kondañña knows! Kondañña knows!," and that is how that venerable one acquired the name, Añña-Kondañña — Kondañña who knows.

Spiritual Soup

Kurt Venables

The Power of the Solstices and Misplaced Values

Many ancient cultures are generally regarded as having worshiped the sun. The Egyptians, for instance, certainly did so. As I write this in mid June, we are approaching the solstices, which occur on June 21st. The northern hemisphere will experience the summer solstice; the southern, the winter solstice. The solstices are rich with symbolism, both of our physical and spiritual lives.

At the summer solstice, the sun is at its strongest, the day at its longest. Many ancient cultures are believed to have celebrated the summer solstice, such as the Maya. The ancients were closer to nature than we today and were certainly aware that the sun was a life giver. Summer solstice rituals were almost certainly celebrations of physical life and health- crops, as well as animal and human life. The event also has strong spiritual symbolism, certain aspects of which were probably recognized by various ancient cultures. The sun is the world's primary source of light. The Light within is the spark, the joy, that makes life worth living. The summer solstice is emblematic of the all-important value of the Light within for giving spiritual life. Recognizing the strength of the Light is the greatest value we can possess. The Light also reveals the wonder of the ordinary, the wonder of our own lives. Beauty surrounds us, if we see with our hearts. Celebrating the life giver is a celebration of life and a recognition of the value and wonder of our own lives and consciousness.



At the winter solstice, the sun is at its weakest and the earth is dead. How could this possibly be cause for celebration? Again, the ancients were much closer than we to the natural rhythms. They understood the natural cycle of life- Dawn always follows night; spring always follows winter. They were intimately familiar with the cycle of death and rebirth. Many ancient cultures are believed to have celebrated the winter solstice. Stonehenge is aligned with the rising sun at the summer solstice and the setting sun at the winter solstice, suggesting that it was used to commemorate one or both of these events. Winter solstice rituals were almost certainly celebrations of physical rebirth, the rebirth of the world, the new year. In addition, the winter solstice is as rich in spiritual symbolism as the summer solstice. The winter solstice is symbolic of the idea that death on earth brings life in the heavens, representing a belief in the afterlife, or life again on earth, encompassing a belief in reincarnation.

The winter solstice can also symbolize the idea that the death of earthly desire brings spiritual life. This concept is central to Buddhism. I also believe this and understand it to mean that we must have the right values to achieve spiritual progress. True happiness is the ultimate goal of life. The Buddhists believe this. As stated in the Declaration of Independence, the idea is “self-evident”. Conquering the desire for excessive materialism, power, prestige, etc. frees the heart to fill with love and the joy that accompanies it. We must be very wise about what will truly bring us happiness, especially since our culture teaches us little in this respect. So many think that if they only had a bigger SUV, or granite counter tops, then they will finally be happy. I do recognize that a certain level of material well-being is necessary for life, and health, and to raise a family, which are all very important values. What is unnecessary is excessive materialism. What truly makes us happy is the Light, and we must have the right values to walk the spiritual path. We must work to conquer what I call the Four Horsemen: Close-mindedness and Misplaced Values, Selfishness, Arrogance, and Negativity and Stress. The antidote to these spiritual poisons is what I call the Quartet of Angels: Truth, Love, Humility, and Optimism.

Let us celebrate the solstices and the spiritual values that they represent.

The Struggle

Tony Masiello

What do butterflies have in common with the human spirit? Meet Maggie, a middle aged wife and mother who was about to find out.

Maggie wasn't rich like a millionaire or poor in a manner of being homeless. She was living an average comfortable life. It was made even better when a beautiful baby girl came her way. She and her husband made sure their daughter had her needs met and they were still able to take a yearly vacation by the beach.

Maggie was a partner in her husband's business. They both had a different set of duties which kept everything in balance. One day a devastating blow came to her husband's business, and over a three year period the business dropped out of site. Her husband had to totally reinvent himself and was yearning to fulfill a dream with a new vocation. She was happy for him and supported him fully, but still the money was not coming in.

Maggie began to feel guilty that she wasn't contributing with any kind of income. It had been a long time since she had worked outside the home and had to work for someone else. Needless to say she was scared but still had faith that everything would be okay. She began job hunting and found filling out applications somewhat difficult, especially the part asking for job references. Keep in mind that she was self-employed with her husband for almost 20 years. It felt as though that didn't count for anything as she was never called for an interview.

At the time she was job hunting her mom became more ill than she had been and ended up in the hospital for a week. Once Maggie's mom returned home she became her mom's helper one day a week. She did the shopping, changed sheets, vacuumed and did other things that her mother was not able to do anymore. Of course her mom would pay her for her time and labor but she still felt she needed to find another source of income.

One of the first applications she had filled out finally came through. She passed the interview with flying colors and was told she was "exactly" what they were looking for. Although it was only part time it was exactly what she wanted. It was important for her to be home when her daughter arrived home from school. She was told they would be in touch when the schedule was ready. Knowing she had the job made her feel contented and productive again.

Within a few weeks though, she received an e-mail saying that the company had changed the job into a full time position and she was not qualified. Maggie was devastated. She felt betrayed and felt she had been lied to. That evening she was alone as her husband and daughter had gone out for the night. She welcomed the aloneness and wanted to drown her sorrows in a hot tub of bubbles.

As she knew she would, she began to cry, softly at first just from the sheer pain of being rejected. Three long years of struggle had finally caught up with her. Then she became angry; angry at everything from the circumstances that got her there, to God himself. She cried harder and yelled, "What do you want me to do?" She really felt that God had abandoned her.

When she was able to cry no more, she became exhausted and gave up. It was at that moment that a silent idea came to her to offer other elderly people home care assistance.

Using another talent for computers she printed off some flyers and cards and distributed them to her church, grocery stores and even placed a small ad in the newspaper. Within a week she had procured two new clients.

Now, even though she's not a CEO of a major company or a power player she feels happy and productive again. So, had God really abandoned her? Let's look at nature for the lessons and the answer.

Before a butterfly can emerge out of it's chrysalis it has to go through a lot of struggling. Yes, struggling. Each time it lunges out to escape, acids are being removed from its wings. If someone were to come along and break the chrysalis open for it then the butterfly would die from those acids. In essence the struggle is necessary for the butterfly to survive. Then in the stillness, when the struggle is over, the

butterfly can come out and share its beauty with the world.

We as humans are not any different. There are times that we need to struggle, to rid ourselves of the acids that make up sadness, fear, and anger. It is only at this time when we are exhausted and still that we begin to hear the Universe whisper to us.



© Tony Masiello 2006

Tony Masiello is a speaker, author, and consultant. He is the author of the e-book, *Whispers from the Universe*, which is a collection of writings that will help you, motivate you, inspire you and guide you along the inner path of your life.

<http://www.whispersfromtheuniverse.com>

Doubt Your Doubt, Not Your Dream

Cathy & Gary Hawk

For several years Ben has been dreaming of moving from the city to a small town in the mountains. As a writer and consultant, he has always believed he could live and do his work from any location. Following a vacation in a mountain town that he loved, he became very energized about living there. He began to plan his move and told friends about it. One of his friends offered some “friendly advice” about the disadvantages of living in a small community. Suddenly, Ben began to ask himself “What am I thinking? What if I’m wrong about wanting the small town lifestyle?” Doubt set in and became the focus of his thoughts. For several weeks, Ben kept playing in his mind the same repetitive pattern of questions and his dream, over and over. He couldn’t move forward and he couldn’t give up the dream he had for so many years. Nothing happened, inertia took over.

Ben decided to shift his attention by gathering more information. He created a list of questions related to moving and the community, and began to do research to gather facts. He contacted realtors in the town, asked a couple of his long term clients how it would affect their working relationship, and investigated the services available for both his work and his lifestyle. While he was gathering these facts and writing them down, he stayed curious and objective. He looked at the whole situation as if the idea of moving was brand new. He removed his personal attachment to the outcome. After gathering all the facts, Ben focused on how energized he was about the information he had gathered. It became obvious that he was very “lights on” about relocating to the mountains. Inertia and swirling doubt were gone, and he is now enjoying the life he had dreamed about for so many years.

The principle of this story is doubt your doubt, not your dream.

1. To get out of doubt and fear of the unknown, shift your attention by gathering information.
2. Ask seven questions related to your vision. This will give you enough knowledge and intelligent answers to continue with certainty.
3. Stay curious and know nothing. Look at all people and situations as if they are brand new to you.
4. Stay objective and don’t take any information personally. The observer affects the outcome. Any preconceived ideas can alter how you see things and therefore the outcome.
5. After you have objectively gathered the information, observe your energy about the information. Start using your intuition, stop analyzing. Analysis dulls intuition. If you stop analyzing and start using intuition, you access whole brain intelligence.

Live every day with your lights on!

© Cathy and Gary Hawk 2006

Cathy Hawk is Founding Director of Clarity International. A veteran energy coach, she helps professionals, executives and small business owners recharge their lives and work through her innovative interview and image-feedback process called Lights On Learning Method™.

www.getclarity.com

